SOLIDARITY NEWS

16/5/95

Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of *Solidarity News*. This newsletter will be issued initially on a fortnightly basis. It is for and on behalf of all the craftworkers in the Aer Lingus Group. The need for such a publication based on feedback from shop stewards and members has never been more evident. With the multiplicity of shifts and the huge raft of changes as a result of Labour Court recommendations, our old methods of communication have become more or less redundant. With the five year plan still to come it is essential that there is a means of communicating with all craftworkers. It is intended that Solidarity will be that means of communication by undertaking the following:

(1) Reporting on all meetings where issues relating to craftworkers are discussed

(2) Correcting the constant flow of inaccurate and misleading information from both management and the media

(3) By providing the shop stewards with the means of across the board clarifications and responses to any query or problem raised by the membership.

(4) By publishing the times and dates of branch meeting and any other events organised by the unions.

Finances

For all too long management and the media have succeeded in painting a picture of Team as a company which has swallowed almost £70 million in aid from the parent company and from governments. Nothing could be further from the truth.

With the five year plan about to be released, it is essential that we set the record straight on the finances of Team to date. You may ask, why bother after everything that has happened. Nobody listened in the past, why should they listen now. Fair point. But to accept it is to abdicate any responsibility we have as trade unionists towards our own future.

We believe it is critical that the financial mismanagement of Team's affairs by Aer Lingus Group Management is exposed. In doing so we would go a long way towards making a case for Team to receive a large element of the next £50 million injection of equity. This money will be essential if there is to be

(1) an investment programme in equipment and technology to allow us compete on an equal footing with our competitors.

(2) An early retirement programme to address the shameful treatment of our older craftworkers, many of whom are close to sixty years and over.

Part of setting the record straight involves all craftworkers. This week's issue contains a fact sheet on Team's finances. You are asked to bring it to the attention of your local TD. Explain its contents to him/her and secure from them a commitment to ensure that Team gets the necessary support to guarantee our future.

If we can achieve (1) and (2) above, our current operating loss of £80,000 per week, will be turned into an operating profit.

Health & Safety

Health & safety standards have fallen to a deplorable level. There has been 46 recorded accidents since January. We have been extremely fortunate that nobody was seriously injured or killed in any of these accidents. At last it appears that management have been shocked into action by these appalling statistics and they appear to be making some effort towards addressing the many serious deficiencies in our health and safety standards. However, there is a long way to go before this facility could be said to meet national and international safety standards.

We too must play a major part in ensuring our own health and safety. The following guidelines would help you do this

(1) Elect a safety rep for your area to ensure representation at Safety Committee level.

(2) Use protective equipment as provided.

(3) Do not accept directives from anyone that would require you to involve yourself in unsafe work practices.

(4) Do not accept directives from anyone to work in an environment that places you at risk.

(5) Report all unsafe equipment and conditions to the safety rep and your supervisor.

(6) Insist on safety data sheets being made available on any chemical or hazardous substance which you may be asked to use.

(7) Do whatever is in your power to ensure a safe work environment for yourself and your fellow workers.

(8) Report all accidents and dangerous incidents immediately.

We believe if these guidelines are followed there should be a dramatic improvement in safety in the workplace.

Finally, National Safety At Work Week runs from 15th to 21st May. We would ask that everyone actively participate in the events organised around this week.

NEXT SAFETY MEETING 18TH MAY.

Labour Court

On Friday 5/5/95 unions and management met the Labour Court to present their respective cases on the issue of day workers being directed to work "seasonality". The union case in brief is that

(1) The Labour Court recommendation No. 14552 as it concerns day working clearly states - Day working Monday to Saturday with a maximum 5 day week - Monday to Friday; Tuesday - Saturday.

(2) Seasonality could not apply to day workers as it would require them to work a six day week which is a clear breach of the LRC as it applies to day workers.

(3) Seasonality combined with the flexible week would require dayworkers to work every Saturday. This would also be in clear breach of the LCR which states alternative Saturday working only, for day workers working the flexible week, or shift workers working seasonality.

(4) The unions also produced management's submission made to the Labour Court during the Summer. This submission clearly shows that management only required dayworkers to work a flexible week and not seasonality as they now claim. During the proceedings the court questioned management on how they could possibly expect day workers to work both seasonality and the flexible week, as this would require them to work every Saturday. Management replied it was possible to work both systems together and still work only one Saturday per fortnight. They said they had already achieved this in several cases by rostering day workers to work 2 X 12 days per week = 8 hours seasonality, followed by a flexible week.

The unions strongly objected to this statement from management and pointed out to the Court that the Company were now in clear breach of the agreement on two counts

(a) Forcing day workers to work seasonality

(b) Forcing people to work seasonality at times other than those clearly laid down in the Labour Court recommendation.

The Court have yet to produce their findings